

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5071

As of February 10, 2009

Title: An act relating to the state endemic mammal.

Brief Description: Designating the Olympic marmot the official endemic mammal of the state of Washington.

Sponsors: Senator Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 2/09/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: The state of Washington confers the official designation on various flora, fauna, performing arts, minerals, and tartan. The official fauna are designated as the orca, the official marine mammal; the willow goldfinch, the official bird; the common green darner dragonfly, the official insect; and the steelhead trout, the official fish.

The Olympic Marmot is the only endemic mammal in Washington State. Olympic Marmots inhabit the Olympic Peninsula in the western section of Washington. Olympic Marmots are highly social animals and may live in groups of over a dozen animals. Gregarious bonds are made between animals in a family. Olympic Marmots identify each other by touching noses and smelling cheeks.

Olympic Marmots hibernate from September to May. During the morning and afternoon on summer days, they feed and spend their time sunbathing on rocks. In the evening, they return to their burrows. Olympic Marmots are relatively easy to see during the summer months along Hurricane Ridge in the Olympic National Park.

Summary of Bill: The Olympic Marmot is designated as the state endemic mammal.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The Olympic Marmot is the only endemic mammal in the state of Washington. The Olympic Marmot lives only in the alpine zone of the Olympic National Park. It is important for Washington State citizens to be aware of this rare and unique animal. Olympic Marmots live in groups of 12 or more. Their hibernation lasts three to nine months. They stay together in their burrow with the rest of their group. This is believed to help them stay warm. They move in underground tunnels that connect to their burrows. The Olympic Marmot can be observed around Hurricane Ridge. This is an example of connecting children to nature. This can bring our communities together around wildlife. By designating the Olympic Marmot, this will call attention to a species that is specific to Washington whose population is declining.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Caroline Malone, Garrett Lawrence, Erin Cunningham, Nick Jansen, Claire Demorest, Gabe Briggs, Wedgwood Elementary School; Jim Kenagy, University of Washington, Burke Museum; Harriet Allen, Margaret Tudor, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Pacific Education Institute.